

BUTTER EMPIRE EXHIBITION

It's about GREAT BUTTER



As part of a funded initiative by the Faculty of Arts

at the University of Bristol to enhance research

culture, Peter Baxter collaborated with Brent

Museum and Archives in the London Borough of

Brent working with participants to create zines.

The opportunity provided valuable work

experience in the public research context,

contributing to academic and professional growth,

, and some irreverent zines.

Using the anniversary moment of the British

Empire Exhibition, 1924 and 1925, Peter Baxter

conducted informal interviews with

participants unfamiliar with local history, collecting

creative responses to historical materials which

offered content for the zines.

The zines are shared through various physical and

digital platforms, and the best place to start is at

the Internet Archive.



**THIS IS
NOT THE
BRITISH EMPIRE
EXHIBITION**

GUIDE

Aye, should these butter statues melt, we'll have a veritable buttery river flowing from the Australian and Canadian pavilions!



Not quite ready for another dip in the dairy...

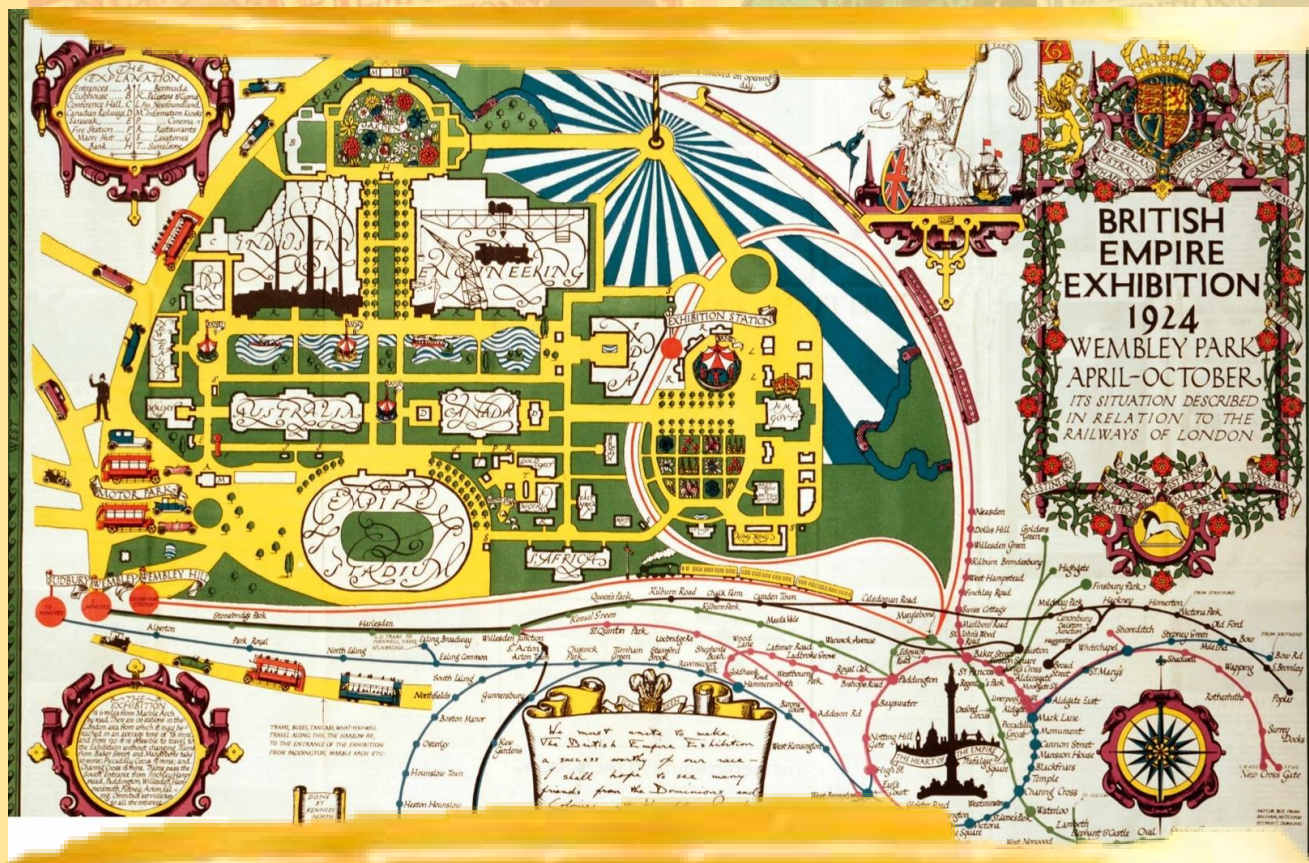


I used to be a Prince's nose.



AUSTRALIAN PRODUCE
are BEING COOLED BY

The British Empire Exhibition boasted displays showcasing the achievements and exploits of Britain and its colonies. Exhibited within a site sprawling Wembley Park, it included its own stadium, fairground, pavilions, but most memorable to visitors were sculptures carved in butter...



A map of the British Empire Exhibition's vast 216-acre grounds in Wembley Park depicting the potential course of butter flow from the Australian and Canadian pavilions, had the butter effigies on display succumb to melting.

Nonsense!





PHOTO:
CAMPELL-GRAY.

BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION, WEMBLEY.
H.R.H. PRINCE OF WALES AND RANCH MODELLED IN BUTTER, CANADIAN SECTION.

695.D.
SEAGLES' POSTCARD.

In 1924, the Canadians featured a large refrigerated case in their Pavilion displaying a life-sized butter sculpture of the Prince of Wales and his horse. Not to be outdone, the Australians created an even larger butter sculpture for the 1925 exhibition, depicting a scene from their recent 4-1 victory over England in the Ashes. The sculpture captured top English batsman Jack Hobbs being stumped during the Sydney test match.

In an article by local Brent historian, Philip Grant describes one of the new developments showcased at the exhibition was refrigeration, which enabled ships to transport meat and dairy products to Britain from around the world.[1] This innovation intensified the rivalry between two of the largest Dominions in the Empire.



I've been
utterly
reconstituted
since 1536!



The British Empire Exhibition of 1924 and 1925 showcased Britain's dominance and economic success, often built on colonial exploitation and extraction.



Among its highlights were intricate butter sculptures of the Prince of Wales in the Canadian Pavilion, reflecting the ancient craft of butter carving practiced since 1536 in Europe and earlier in Tibet, Babylon, and Roman Britain. [2]




The word butter derives from the Latin butyrum, which is the latinisation of the Greek bouturon.

These sculptures, depicting the Prince with his horse in 1924 and as a First Nations chief in 1925, were displayed to celebrate Canadian dairy while exposing advancements in refrigeration technology. This innovation allowed global transport of perishable goods, sparking a friendly rivalry with Australia, which responded with its own grand butter sculpture in 1925.

The best remembered display for Margaret Bird, who visited the exhibition with her father at aged 11 years was in the Pavilion in the the dairy produce section. She remembers her visit as being one of learning trip, her father taking to the different exhibits and teaching something about the displays.

It is the butter sculptures that she remembers the most laughing as she recounts seeing a cow made of the creamy churned milk. It is likely to have been the horse of the Prince of Wales she remembers as he stood beside his horse outside his ranch at Pekisko, Alberta, preserved in a refrigerated case at the exhibition.



Visit the Brent Museum and Archives to hear Margaret Bird's excursion to the exhibition.



The Prince of Wales featured in two butter sculptures in refrigerated cases in the Canadian Pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition. The sculptures were both displays of patriotism and an effective advertisement for the Canadian dairy industry.

In 1924 the sculpture depicted the Prince standing beside his horse outside his ranch at Pekisko, Alberta. 3,000 pounds of butter were used to produce the sculpture.

The 1925 sculpture showed the Prince seated in the dress of a First Nations chief and was based on Edward's visit to Banff in 1919, where he had been made an honorary chief by the Assiniboine. It was sculpted by George Kent and Beauchamp Hawkins.

The figures of First Nations women in the 1925 butter sculpture case were the only reference to Canada's First Nations in the Canada Pavilion. [3]

A butter sculpture of Edward VIII in 1925



It is on record that the Prince was pleased with both sculptures. When Queen Mary saw the butter sculpture of her son she laughed and said it was "quite a remarkable likeness." The British press was impressed too, declaring the 1925 sculpture one of the wonders of Wembley.[3]

Others were equally impressed. One schoolgirl said that the prince of Wales in butter "was the one feature that captured everybody's imagination," [4] while a schoolboy said that his favourite exhibit at the Exhibition was the Prince of Wales in butter, and that "an ear'd keep us a week." Some in the Canadian press were however unhappy about the 1925 sculpture, with one paper writing "it is time that Canada should cease to be advertised by representations of Indians in war paint." [3]



PHOTO:
CAMPBELL-GRAY.

BRITISH EMPIRE EX
JACK HOBBS MODE

Having seen the success of the Prince of Wales in butter in the Canadian Pavilion, in 1925 the Australians placed a larger butter sculpture in their pavilion at Wembley Park.



**EXHIBITION, WEMBLEY.
MELLED IN BUTTER.**

**895.0.
SEAGLES' POSTCARDS.**

It showed England cricketer Jack Hobbs being stumped at the Sydney Cricket Ground during the 1924–25 test series, which Australia won 4–1.



References

- [1] Philip Grant has contributed a wealth of knowledge and information to Brent local history. Visit: brent.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/brent-museum-and-archives
- [2] Pamela H. Simpson. Butter Cows and Butter Buildings: A History of an Unconventional Sculptural Medium, *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 1–19.
- [3] Clendinning, Anne (2006). "Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–1925". *Histoire sociale / Social History*.
- [4] Geppert, A. (2010). *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.



Find out about the British Empire Exhibition at the Brent Museum and Archives.

brent.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/brent-museum-and-archives

